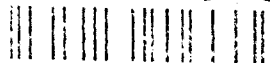


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WOMEN IN COMBAT IN TOMORROW'S NAVY

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MAY 20 1993

BY

COMMANDER NANCY E. BROWN
United States Navy

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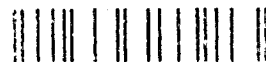
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WOMEN IN COMBAT IN TOMORROW'S NAVY

AN INDIVIDUAL STUDY PROJECT

by

Commander Nancy E. Brown
United States Navy

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Project Adviser

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I. Introduction

The role of women in the military today is a much debated topic. The contribution that women made during Desert Shield/Desert Storm has brought the issue of women in combat to the forefront of political and social concerns. Few topics generate such an emotional response on both sides of the issue and have the potential for such a pervasive effect on the social and cultural values of the American public.

One of the factors that makes this issue unique is the diminished role that facts seem to play in supporting arguments on either side. Issues are more often based in emotion than logic. Individual talent is secondary to social implications and perceived behaviors.

The purpose of this paper is to thoroughly review the arguments on both sides of this emotionally charged issue. On the basis of the results, a proposal for the utilization of women in the Navy will be presented. This review will look at the historical contributions of women, their status within the Navy as governed by law and policy, problems associated with full integration, solutions to these problems and recommendations on how to proceed.

II. Background

History is replete with examples of women serving in the military, fighting for their country and dying for their beliefs.

Whenever there has been conflict, women have found a way to serve. As far back as the Roman Legions, there is evidence that bands of women in Ireland, Germany, Britain and the Iberian Peninsula fought savagely to protect their land. During the Medieval period, there is information that women were soldiers and commanders of entire armies. Examples include: Eleanor of Aquitaine, Jane of Flanders, Agnes, Countess of Dunbar, Philippa of Hainault, Margaret of Anjou, Mary of Hungary, Queen Margaret of Denmark, Catherine the Great, Isabella of Spain, Joan of Arc and Elizabeth I. All these women are credited with commanding men, fighting wars and making history.¹

The most famous all female force was formed by King Gezo of Dahomey, West Africa, in the 19th century. The King had three regiments each composed of 1000 women. The women were products of a society in which women were accustomed to doing the hardest work. To qualify for one of the regiments, they had to walk through fire and over thorns. To stay in the force, they had to abstain from sex and be willing to fight to the death. The accounts of their battles indicate no weaknesses as a result of their sex. Their reputation has remained one of fierce warriors who always fought heroically.² More recent examples of female warriors revolve around individual heroics where women were spies, terrorist, partisans, revolutionaries, prisoners and camp followers.

The history of the United States contains many examples of women fighting alongside men. Their contributions have been significant and further support the claim that women are not strangers to combat. Service since the Revolutionary War has taken

many forms from women disguised as men to camp followers who served as nurses. Both the War of 1812 and the Civil War provided examples of women serving next to men on the front lines, as spies and as nurses. The contribution that gained the most notoriety was nursing, leading to the first institutionalization of women in the military with the establishment of the Army Nurse Corps in 1901. Although the nurses had no military rank, equal pay or other benefits of military service they were recognized as a necessary and permanent part of the Army.³

The contributions made by other women were not so recognized. The sacrifice and the courage displayed won them no lasting foothold in the military. It was not until 1916 that the Secretary of the Navy explored the possibility of using women in jobs other than nursing. He believed that as men were ordered off to combat, a shortage of personnel to fully support the clerical requirements of the headquarters staff would develop. On March 19, 1917, the Navy Department authorized the enrollment of women in the Naval Reserve. When the United States entered World War I in April of that year, the Navy was able to enlist women.

By the end of the war, 34,000 women had served in the Army and Navy Nurse Corps, the Navy, the Marines and the Coast Guard. Women served as clerical support, translators, draftsmen, munitions workers, fingerprint experts, camouflage designers and recruiters. Women had overcome the first obstacles in a male-dominated work force and started a revolution that is still being waged today. They had found new freedom in the work place, both at home and

overseas, and things would never again be the same.

The end of the war saw a push for the old boundaries to be reestablished. Women were transferred to inactive status and then discharged. The job market was flooded with returning male veterans and the opportunities for women decreased at a rapid rate. It was not until World War II that opportunity knocked and severe personnel shortages again called for the recruitment of women. In 1942, the Navy established the Women Accepted for Voluntary Emergency Service (WAVES) and the Army established the Women's Army Auxiliary Corps (WAAC). Women filled nontraditional roles in every theater of war and were often placed in harm's way as noncombatants. More than two hundred Army nurses were killed, five on the Anzio beach head, and 16 in direct enemy action. In the Philippines and Japan, 82 women were taken prisoner, and in the United States, 38 were killed while performing flight duties.⁴

By the end of World War II, the need for a permanent vehicle to assimilate women in the military in anticipation of future crisis was recognized. After much debate, Congress passed the Women's Armed Services Act of 1948 that became law on June 12th of that year when it was signed by President Truman. The law established a permanent place for women in all the services and provided for mobilization in case of emergency. One of the major hurdles in passage of the law was the fear that enlisted men would have to take orders from women officers. In order to overcome this concern, language was inserted that gave the Service Secretaries the ability to limit the military authority that females could

exercise and the duties they would be assigned.⁵

Another area of concern was that of combat. While the Navy and the Air Force were able to clearly define combat positions, the Army definition was not as clear. Rather than wrestle with this, the law was written with assignment exclusions in the Navy and the Air Force but the Army assignment policy was left up to the Service Secretary.

Our involvement in both Korea and Vietnam once again created demand for military women. Although still restricted in the positions they could hold and governed by double standards, women again volunteered to serve. However, the response from women was not as great as during World War II and the services were unable to meet their recruitment quotas. Negative attitudes toward women in the service, low pay and civilian job opportunities all contributed to the low numbers of volunteers.

The watershed event for women in the military was the end of the draft in 1973 and the establishment of an All Volunteer Force (AVF). The increasing difficulty in recruiting enough young males escalated the need for women. This gave impetus to efforts focused on making service life more attractive to women. Throughout the 70's and the 80's, there continued to be increasing pressure to expand opportunities and to increase career potential for women. Entry into the service academies in 1976 was one of the major accomplishments to this end, followed in 1978 by modification of Public Law 625 allowing women to serve on noncombatant vessels and on combat ships for periods not to exceed 180 days.

In 1983, female crew members were used to airlift troops and supplies into Grenada while U.S. forces were engaged in combat, and 200 Army women were deployed with military police and helicopter crew units in the theater of operations. The Air Strike on Libya in 1986 included participation by women as aircraft commanders and crew members aboard tankers refueling bombers and Navy pilots flying carrier onboard delivery missions. In 1987, the tender USS ACADIA deployed to the Gulf with a mixed gender crew to repair USS STARK. Operation JUST CAUSE in 1989, saw the first woman to command U.S. troops in combat. Captain Linda Bray in command of a military police unit engaged in hostile fire with Panamanian troops. An additional 174 Army women in combat support and military police units were in theater and Air Force women piloted and crewed transports carrying troops and supplies. Between August 1990 and April 1991, more than 40,000 women served in Operation Desert Shield/Desert Storm. They were deployed on support vessels, flew helicopters, commanded air defense batteries and military police battalions, and performed intelligence, transportation, ordnance, administrative and medical functions. Twelve women died (four in hostile action), twenty-one were wounded in action and two became prisoners of war.

III. Current Status

From a historical perspective great strides have been made in the military's employment of women particularly since the arrival

of the AVF. Women's professionalism, dedication, commitment and motivation have been rewarded with ever-increasing responsibilities and challenges. To provide a common baseline for further discussion on the issue of women in combat the status quo needs to be explored.

Title 10 United States Code, Section 6015, gives the Secretary of the Navy the authority to prescribe the kind of military duty women may be assigned and the military authority that they may exercise. It also prohibits the assignment of women to duty on vessels engaged in combat missions, other than as aviation officers as part of an air wing or their air element assigned to such a vessel. Also prohibited is their assignment, other than temporary duty, on vessels, except hospital ships, transports and vessels of similar classification, not expected to be assigned combat missions. This reflects the amended wording resulting from the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Years 1992 and 1993, Public Law 102-190-5, December, 1991, that lifted the ban on women flying combat aircraft.

Navy policy is contained in SECNAVINST 1300.12A, dated 20 February 1989, and OPNAVINST 1300.17, dated 5 October 1990. These instructions authorize women members to permanently be assigned duty in tenders, ammunition ships, combat stores ships, fleet oilers, repair ships, salvage ships, submarine rescue ships, hospital ships, cargo ships, an auxiliary aircraft landing training ship and vessels of a similar classification, including ships of the Military Sealift Command not expected to be assigned a combat

mission. It further provides for the assignment of pilots, naval flight officers, mission specialists and aircrew in aviation squadrons that do not have combat missions and as ground support personnel in any land-based squadron. Women can also be permanently assigned to other non-combat units that qualify as sea duty. Units that perform their duties aboard combatant vessels on a temporary additional duty basis, such as mobile training teams and inspection teams are available for the permanent assignment of women. Women can be assigned temporary additional duty to any ship, aircraft or unit not expected to execute a specific combat mission during the period of temporary duty.

There are currently 58,948 women in the Navy, including 8,390 officers. Of this total population, 362 officers and 8,084 enlisted are at sea. There are 183 pilots/NFO's and 4,867 enlisted women in squadrons. Enlisted women are embarked on 47 USN and 19 USNS ships, and women officers are embarked on 48 USN and 8 USNS ships. Women currently comprise 10.5% of the Navy's total population.⁶

Even though the exclusion law banning women from flying combat aircraft was lifted in December 1991, the Navy has not revised its policy accordingly. The justification for this delay is based on the report of the Presidential Commission on the Assignment of Women in the Armed Forces, which was forwarded to the President on 15 November 1992. It is not anticipated that any action will be initiated until President Clinton has an opportunity to review the report and develop his own policy regarding women in combat.

In view of the role played by women and the threats they have faced in the past, the purpose of the law and service policy which excludes women from combat warrants questioning. Today's battlefield extends beyond the front lines and support personnel often face the risks of combat. The number of women that have been killed or injured by hostile fire supports the argument that women are exposed to harm regardless of their designation as noncombatants or their location on the battlefield.

IV. Arguments Against Further Integration of Women

Combat in the Navy raises issues of a unique nature. The mainstream Navy unit involved in combat is at sea geographically separated from the enemy target. The battle is overwhelmingly fought with technology where a touch of the finger is all that is required. Therefore, the arguments surrounding the women in combat argument are based more on social concerns than capabilities. The overriding issues are related to mixed gender crews living together for extended periods of time, pregnancy, physical strength requirements and women prisoners of war. In addition to these social issues, opponents argue that unit integrity and cohesion would be adversely affected if changes to the combat exclusionary policy are implemented.

Navy units vary in size, capability and mission. The larger the vessel the easier it is to accommodate mixed gender crews. However, one of the major barriers to assigning women to combat

units is the ability to maintain good order and discipline with a mixed gender crew living in close quarters for long periods of time, isolated from external distractions. This argument is further heightened by the preoccupation that the crew may develop with each other that would naturally degrade combat effectiveness and hinder mission accomplishment. A mixed crew provides a perfect feeding ground for fraternization, jealousy and sexual harassment. The routine disciplinary problems onboard these units, without the added complication of women, provide enough of a leadership challenge and additional burdens are not warranted. Living together in close quarters will also result in an alarming number of pregnancies. The impact of the pregnancy rate is the most damaging to unit effectiveness. Pregnant women are a burden on a command. Other members must do their work filling the void while they are at doctors' appointments. Because pregnant women can not deploy, they negatively impact combat readiness. When the orders went out for troops to deploy for Desert Shield/Desert Storm women, across all services active and reserve, were less likely than men to be able to deploy. The reason for the difference in deployment rates was pregnancy. Once deployed, return rates for women were slightly higher than for men.⁷

Lifting the combat exclusionary rules would put women at a higher risk of being captured by the enemy. This presents yet another issue that is difficult for society to accept: women in the hands of the enemy, at risk of treatment that is unconscionable within our social norms. The presence of women prisoners adds an

additional burden to their male counterparts. The natural tendency to protect women makes these male prisoners more vulnerable to the enemy's means of persuasion.

While combat in the Navy is heavily dependent on technology, life onboard a combatant vessel is not without physical demands. Damage control and firefighting are imperative to the survival of any Naval vessel. Both of these demand quick reaction, physical strength and stamina. The entire crew must be well-versed in these areas and must be able to fulfill their role as a member of a fire party. There is no room for weakness or frailty when the survival of the ship depends on the performance of each team member. In discussing the comparative abilities of women to fight fires aboard ships, VADM Carlson believes that women are going to fight the fire, "...but to put them in a hostile combat environment in which their physical competence may make a difference in saving someone's life or losing a life then the more physically capable person should be selected."

Unit integrity is touted as an integral factor to unit effectiveness especially in a combat situation. The ability to function as a team confident that every member is capable of performing their fair share is imperative to success. The catalyst for this relationship is a phenomenon referred to as "male bonding," a relation that can only be developed between males with no apparent equivalent relationship between the two sexes. It is this male bonding that enhances the performance of the team under combat conditions, solidifying the cohesion of the unit. Testimony

before the President's Commission on the Assignment of Women in the Armed Forces on 28 August 1992, included the following statements on the negative impact introducing women in this environment would have. Capt Dave Freaney, USAF; "I guess I'm old-fashioned in my values, but I cannot see myself running around with my flight of four, you know, doing the town in Song Tong City with--if one of them was a girl...I think it would affect, you know, the effectiveness of my flight squadron." Junior Naval aviators also testified that the introduction of women into combat squadrons would affect unit cohesion. Cited were the unique requirements in combat squadrons for direct, confrontational ready room exchanges to improve tactical skills and make everyone safer in combat. The consensus from this group was that those necessary exchanges could not and would not occur in mixed gender combat squadrons.⁹ Lt. Tom Downing, USN, testified that, "The cohesion involved there is what makes winners, and I think if women are put into the situation, that is going to decrease the overall effectiveness."¹⁰ The testimony consisted of gut feelings and did not contain any facts or cite any actual cases where the introduction of women negatively impacted unit cohesion.

V. Arguments Supporting Further Integration of Women

Mixed gender crews add another dimension to the leadership challenge. While this is undoubtedly true, the talented senior leadership in today's Navy can easily meet this challenge. It is

time to march out smartly on this issue rather than avoiding the inevitable. Clinging to the claim that the laws and society will not allow further integration will not win this battle. The tide has turned and the debate is raging. If the senior military leadership wants to control the destiny of their services they must act. Successful integration requires a plan that addresses changing attitudes and learning to focus on each other as professionals without stereotypes or sexual connotations. By seizing the initiative, the services can plan this transition rather than having it forced upon them. Old arguments are no longer sufficient to win this battle; it is time for us to approach this issue as visionaries who can adapt to the changing environment. This sentiment was expressed by Secretary of the Navy Sean O'Keefe on January 6, 1993, in an address to the Brigade of Midshipmen at the U.S. Naval Academy in Annapolis, Maryland. Secretary O'Keefe endorsed expanding the role of women in combat, including assigning women to fly combat missions and to serve on all naval vessels.

This position is supported by the numerous testimonials verifying the success Navy units have had integrating women. Captain J. F. Kelly Jr., USN (Ret.), who, while on active duty, commanded three different warships, presents the issue this way:

"The biggest problems here are male egos, the lack of self control and discipline necessary to prevent improper sexual behavior on board, the possible consequences of that behavior and the expense of reconfiguring combatants to establish a reasonable degree of privacy. These are formidable challenges to be sure, but they are poor excuses for the lack of progress in fully integrating qualified women into the seagoing Navy."

Captain Kelly further states that the Navy is using the law as an excuse to avoid the difficult aspect of integrating women more fully. "Women have earned the right to serve alongside men when they are fully qualified...It's the right thing to do."¹²

Commander Barry J. Coyle, USN relates similar feelings and cites his experience in Fleet Air Reconnaissance Squadron Three (VQ-3) from September, 1981, to February, 1987. During this period, he held the positions of training officer, operations officer, executive officer and finally, commanding officer. His experience in the squadron with about 25% females dispersed throughout the ranks reveals a unit that improved readiness and became the most highly decorated squadron in the Navy.¹³ CDR Coyle believes that when men deny that women can perform traditionally male duties, their attitude fosters sexual stereotyping, low confidence in women's capabilities and sexual harassment. To overcome these types of attitudes, they held frequent sexual awareness workshops and counseling sessions and penalized those people who could not adapt.¹⁴

Maintaining good order and discipline of mixed gender crews living in close quarters and working together requires strong leadership with clear command policies. There will be problems, but failure to move forward out of fear or an unwillingness to face head-on the challenges of the future only fosters those problems. Acceptance will also become easier as a new generation of young people enters the service. Today's generation is not bound by the same stereotypes as the more senior military leader. They have

grown up in an environment of working mothers in nontraditional roles with school sports and social events open to both sexes.¹⁵

Combat exclusionary laws institutionalize discrimination. How can a male sailor who is required to put his life on the line, convince himself that a female sailor should have the same career opportunities? By excluding women from the risk of combat we deny them the full responsibility and partnership that the military profession demands. It is unfair that women have been able to take advantage of the privileges of military service without the concomitant payback of combatant roles or extended sea deployments. It is important to remember that rights come with responsibilities.¹⁶

The issue that has the greatest impact on unit effectiveness is pregnancy. Evaluating this aspect of women in combat must start with facts. While often cited as a monumental problem adversely affecting unit readiness, facts do not support this claim. A three year study on pregnancy and its effect on the Navy was completed in 1991 by the Naval Personnel Research and Development Command. It found that men and women lose the same amount of time from their jobs each month including the time lost by pregnant women.¹⁷

The other item that has been blown out of proportion, particularly by the media, was the USS ACADIA's deployment during the Gulf war. Contrary to its dubbed nickname the "Love Boat," the facts present a much different picture. The Acadia deployed to the Gulf from September 5, 1990, through April 26, 1991, with

a crew of 890 men and 360 women. In the quarter ending December 31, 1991, 4.2% of the women on board reported being pregnant. In the quarter ending March 31, 1991, the rate declined to 2.5%. The Acadia made 10 port visits during the deployment. It was also noted that the majority of pregnancies began in home port before the ship deployed. The average annual pregnancy rate of military women is 5.1%.¹⁸

Although pregnancy is clearly not at epidemic proportions, the effect it has on a unit's readiness has never been accurately documented. What remains to be determined is the extent of that impact and if it is greater than that caused as a result of sports injuries and disciplinary issues that tend to be predominantly male issues.

Besides unit readiness, there is also a cost associated with replacement. In high cost fields like aviation, that cost could be as much as a half-million dollars. In jobs at this extreme, the Air Force requires that women agree not to become pregnant for a set period of time while they are holding those jobs. Women also agree to submit to periodic pregnancy tests. Captain Troy Devine is one such Air Force officer that has agreed to these conditions to earn the privilege of flying with the Ninth Strategic Reconnaissance Wing at Beale Air Force Base in California.¹⁹

The Gulf war and the capture and imprisonment of two women brought to the forefront the issue of women prisoners of war. Part of this issue is the overprotective nature of the male and

the impact that would have in a combat situation. Certainly no one wants to become a prisoner of war, but it is a possibility that all military women must recognize. A survey of instructors and students who participated in the Joint Services Survival, Evasion, Resistance and Escape Agency, high-risk survival-training course between January and April 1992, found both sexes believed there would be no significant differences between men's and women's abilities to resist and survive captivity. Based on student reactions documented over a period of seven years, the service members' mindset and cultural background have been found to have a greater bearing on their survival than their age or sex. Women do just as well as men in the training and there is no evidence to support the fear that women's presence would adversely affect the conduct of male prisoners.²⁰

The argument that men will be overprotective of women affecting the risk they are willing to take needs to be objectively evaluated. "When men are overprotective of men, we give them awards for valor."²¹ After the Gulf war, an Air Force pilot was awarded a medal for leading a nine-hour rescue mission for a fallen flier. Had the downed flier been a woman would that have been an overprotective act? This issue also raises some skepticism when viewed in the context of some recent events. According to testimony before the House Armed Services Committee, Defense Policy Panel, and Military Personnel and Compensation Subcommittee Hearing on Gender Discrimination on July 30, 1992, when a female aviator in a hallway of a hotel at the 1992

Tailhook convention, looked and asked for help, her fellow male aviator turned his back and walked away.²² That incident raises doubt regarding how overprotective men would be strictly as a result of their comrade's sex. The bottom line is that gender does not make a life any more valuable. The idea that it should or would insults both sexes and diminishes all people.²³

There is no debate regarding the fact that there is a difference in physical strength between most men and most women. The key to this issue is to develop a set of scientifically based physical standards that service members would have to meet to be assigned jobs that require such strength. A 1982 Department of the Army report of the Women in the Army Policy Review proposed just such an objective-based strength-measuring effort by military occupational skills (MOS). The Military Enlistment Physical Strength Capacity Test (MEPSCAT) was designed to match the soldier to the job. The test provided scores that predicted the level of physical work capacity by the end of basic training and advanced individual training. The MOS proponent described the tasks required for each specialty with actual work performed and ensured that such work was intrinsic to the task.²⁴

Unit integrity and male bonding have been alluded to as conditions that cannot be maintained when women are introduced into the equation. While no evidence could be found to support this theory, it is strongly believed by many junior Naval officers. There have, however been studies done by the Army during combat exercises to determine the level at which the

addition of women to a unit resulted in decreased combat readiness. The results indicated that women performed well with the units and that the key to a unit's performance was not the male/female ratio, but the quality of leadership.²⁵

Testimony before the President's Commission on the Assignment of Women in the Armed Forces confirmed these results. Pre-integration studies indicate that male attitudes reflect the same reservations that the addition of women will negatively impact unit cohesion. Post-integration studies found that men enjoyed working with women and that acceptance was based on ability and not sex. CDR Chuck Deitchman, USN, commander of HC-11, reported that after the integration of women in his squadron, the esprit and camaraderie were as good as when the unit was all male. Col Jack Holly, USMC, also testified that the addition of women did not adversely affect bonding. He also added that, "A good commander knows that women want to work harder to be perceived as equals, and that males don't want to be outdone by their female counterparts, and they generate a synergism that gives you quality of excellence within that organization. I wouldn't give that up for anything."²⁶

VI. Myth versus Reality

Women are capable of performing effectively in combat roles. To continue to deny women this responsibility is to continue institutionalized discrimination. The question that must be

resolved is the impact integration will have on combat effectiveness. It is difficult to build an argument on the premise that the introduction of fully capable individuals into combat units will degrade their readiness status. The official Navy policy, with regard to fully integrating women on combatant vessels, is not steeped in facts supporting the claim that combat effectiveness would be degraded. After 15 years of experience with women on noncombatant vessels, the evidence supports just the opposite, that is operational effectiveness very often increases after the introduction of women rather than decreases. There is no reason to believe that the introduction of women on combatant vessels would have a different affect. Full integration of women maximizes the talents of the Navy's personnel resources and eliminates artificial barriers that have outlived their usefulness. The time has come to cast off the myths of the past and plan for the future with the realities of the present.

Myth: The introduction of women into combat units will destroy good order and discipline.

Reality: Good order and discipline are maintained with strong leadership, clear command policies and strict enforcement. This also prevents harassment, fraternization and jealousy problems mixed gender crews are believed to promote. The Gulf war demonstrated that men and women were capable of working together as teams. They could be buddies without fraternizing and they could share common dangers without feigning chivalry.

If there were tensions within a unit, whether sexual, racial or any other kind it showed lack of leadership and proper training. A senior officer commented, "The trained soldier shows discipline---an untrained one looks for trouble and usually finds it."²⁷

Myth: Pregnancy rates adversely affect readiness.

Reality: No documentation exists regarding the impact that pregnancy has on unit readiness. Documentation does exist substantiating that number of days lost each month for men and women are virtually the same. The question then is, what is the impact on the unit from the absences of both sexes. Since the prevailing cause of lost days for males is sports injuries, it may be that the sports program needs to be reviewed. In the case of pregnancy and sports injuries, the problem has never been adequately quantified, there is no evidence supporting the claim that these absences have an adverse impact on unit readiness. It is incumbent upon the Navy to deal in facts on this issue so solutions can be identified. To base an argument on supposition without documentation significantly reduces the credibility of that argument.

Myth: Women are not physically capable of performing the numerous tasks associated with shipboard life.

Reality: Although most women are not as strong as most men, there are relatively few tasks that require brute strength in today's Navy. The issue is how to determine the correct crew mix ratio to ensure that those jobs requiring strength can be

accomplished. This is related to the implementation of an objective-based strength-measuring effort by rating. The challenge is to develop these requirements based on intrinsic military requirements and not merely gender requirements. The reality of the physical strength question is that some men and women are strong and some men and women are weak. The end result of full integration of women must be equal opportunity based on individual capabilities while at the same time sustaining combat effectiveness levels.

Myth: The American public will never accept the idea of women prisoners of war or women being killed in combat.

Reality: As proven by Desert Storm, women in the military risk bodily injury, death and being taken prisoner regardless of their designation as noncombatants. The outcry from the American public was no louder for the women killed than it was for the men. The value we put on human life does not change because of gender, all life is valuable and we mourn the loss of a son or brother just as we mourn the loss of a daughter or sister. Every woman that puts on a uniform takes an oath to support and defend the constitution of the United States. That oath is taken with the full knowledge of what it entails; if it happens that it means combat, then so be it.

Myth: The presence of women reduces unit cohesion and prevents "male bonding."

Reality: Overwhelming evidence exists supporting the fact that the introduction of women does not reduce unit cohesion.

Mixed gender units can achieve the same levels of "esprit de corps" and comraderie. The relationship between male and female crew members is based on respect, trust and sharing of the same hardships. When the artificial barriers are removed, crew members relate to each other as professionals. Cohesion is adversely affected when any group is viewed as protected and not a real team member. Eliminate institutional discrimination and mixed gender crews will bond into cohesive and effective teams.

VII. Recommendations

Specific actions that should be initiated:

1. Eliminate the Combat exclusion laws for women in the Navy;
2. Implement a plan for the complete integration of women;
3. Initiate a study to evaluate the impact of pregnancy on unit readiness. On the basis of this evaluation, develop courses of action to reduce any negative effects that may have been discovered;
4. Develop job related physical standards for ratings, specialties and units where strength may be a factor in performance along with screening and testing procedures for both men and women;
5. Determine crew mix effectiveness ratios based on specific unit requirements;
6. Continue intensive sexual harassment awareness training

fleet wide.

VIII. Conclusion

Women have proven themselves to be dedicated, professional and motivated sailors. Their most recent performance in Desert Shield/Desert Storm is just the latest in a long line of accomplishments and contributions in the defense of their country. The combat exclusion law has not protected women from being injured, killed or taken prisoner in combat situations. Those that have given their lives or suffered at the hand of the enemy, "...should become the spark for a push to redefine the role of American women in combat. And that should lead to equal opportunities for women to advance and face danger; to win promotion and get wounded; to attain glory, and yes, to die."²⁸

ENDNOTES

¹Helen Rogan, Mixed Company (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1981), 78-79.

²Ibid, 80.

³Jeanne Holm, Women in the Military (California: Presidio Press, 1982), 9.

⁴Mary Ann Attebury. "Women and Their Wartime Roles," Minerva: Quarterly Report, Spring 1990, 13.

⁵Holm, 18.

⁶Special Assistant for Women's Policy CDR S.P. Clements, "Women In The Navy Quarterly Report (JUL-SEPT 92)," memorandum for distribution, 5 January 1993.

⁷Grant Willis, "Women's Roles: The Debate Rages," Army Times, 10 August 1992, p.3.

⁸Presidential Commission, Assignment Of Women In the Armed Forces, U.S. Government Printing Office Washington D.C., 15 November 1992, p.73.

⁹Ibid, 70.

¹⁰Ibid, 71.

¹¹Captain J.F. Kelly Jr., "It is past time to expand the sea-going role of women," Navy Times, 2 April 1990, p 23.

¹²Ibid, 23.

¹³Commander Barry J. Coyle, "Women on the Front Lines," Proceedings, April 1989, 37-40.

¹⁴Ibid, 39.

¹⁵Lt. A. DiLucente, USNR, "Equality: A Step Backward," Proceedings, February 1992, 47.

¹⁶Ibid, 46.

¹⁷Deborah Schmidt, "Women's Role Expected To Expand in Military," Navy Times, 6 January 1992, p 16.

¹⁸Willis, 3.

¹⁹Barbara Kantrowitz, "The Right To Fight," Newsweek, 5 August 1992, 23.

²⁰Grant Willis, "Sexual Assault an Occupational Hazard," Army Times, 22 June 1992, p. 6.

²¹Kantrowitz, 30.

²²Congress, House Armed Services Committee, Defense Policy Panel and Military Personnel and Compensation Subcommittee Hearing, Gender Discrimination, 30 July 1992, 24.

²³DiLucente, 47.

²⁴Lieutenant Colonel Robert L. Maginis, USA, "The Future of Women in the Army," Military Review, July 1992, 29.

²⁵Carolyn H. Becraft, "Personnel Puzzle," Proceedings, April 1989, 41.

²⁶Presidential Commission, 85-86.

²⁷Jeanne Holm, Women In The Military (California: Presidio Press, Revised Edition 1992), 463.

²⁸Stephen Aubin, "Women in Combat," Defense Media Review, March 1991, 4.

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